

Estyn Report shows Welsh education is uniting in a mission of self-improvement – Kirsty Williams

The report found there is “enough excellence across Welsh education to support improvement and help reduce variability” and that there is a “spirit of cooperation” with the teaching profession in developing a new curriculum.

The report also welcomes:

- The establishment of a National Academy of Educational Leadership;
- A “more systematic approach” to how pupils learn, apply and practise their literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
- Major changes in how professional learning is organised;
- Improvements in attendance and behaviour;
- Strengths in learner wellbeing, care, support and guidance, and learning environment; and
- Strengthened links between higher and further education.

Welcoming the report, Kirsty Williams said:

“Our national mission for education seeks to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and enjoys public confidence.

“It is clear from reading this report that there is sustained momentum in Welsh education; a culture of self-improvement that is embedded in the system and, most importantly, owned by those working in the profession.

“I am heartened to see the Chief Inspector welcoming the steps we have taken to drive up standards and support improvement in our schools – particularly our efforts to work with the teaching profession in developing the new curriculum.

“The report notes our efforts to reduce the attainment gap, but we know there is no room for complacency. That’s why we’re doubling the Pupil Development Grant for our youngest learners, so that every child has the opportunity to reach their potential.

“By continuing to work together, I am confident that we can achieve our national mission and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.”

Supporting ageing workforce key to tackling future US economic challenges

24/01/2018 – Providing American seniors with better work incentives and opportunities will be crucial for the United States to meet the challenges of its rapidly ageing population. By 2028, more than one in five Americans will be aged 65 and over, up from fewer than one in six today, according to a new OECD report.

Working Better with Age and Fighting Unequal Ageing in the United States

finds that employment rates among older workers in the United States are above the average across OECD countries. In 2016, 62% of all 55-64 year olds were employed compared with the OECD average of 59%. However, employment rates are much lower among some older population groups. Early retirement is prevalent among workers from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, often occurring as soon as Social Security benefits become available at age 62. Poverty among seniors is a challenge: more than 20% of people aged 65 and over have incomes below the relative poverty line – defined as half of the median disposable household income – compared with the OECD average of less than 13%.

“More needs to be done to promote greater inclusiveness at old age and foster better, longer working lives for all Americans. A comprehensive policy approach is needed to help individuals overcome disadvantages over their life course,” said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, launching the report at the World Economic Forum in Davos. “This could both help reduce old-age poverty and strengthen public finances by reducing public outlays on Social Security.”

The report stresses the importance of fostering more flexible transitions to retirement, for example through a combination of part-time work and pension incomes. This can help older workers to remain employed longer. Currently, however, only around 40% of older workers in the United States aged 65 and over are working part-time compared with over 65% in OECD countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom.

Among its other recommendations, the OECD suggests the following approaches:

- *Promote well-informed choices between work and retirement.*
Provide easily understandable information – especially to seniors with poor financial literacy – about the financial implications of early or late retirement.
- *Support businesses in providing older workers with good jobs.*
With relatively little employment protection and no mandatory retirement age, the willingness of US firms to hire and retain older workers is key to better employment opportunities for older workers. The experience of

other OECD countries can help key stakeholders in the United States identify best practices in the private sector to recruit, retain and retrain older workers. For instance, according to the Fuller Working Lives Business Strategy Group in the United Kingdom, it is crucial to improve awareness of line managers of issues affecting older workers' employment, so that they can provide effective support.

- *Provide equal opportunities for workers to upgrade their skills throughout their working lives.*

For workers in their mid-to-late careers, training and upskilling is essential to foster inclusive employment. The digital transformation makes this even more important. If no action is taken, the prospects of future generations of older workers in the United States and of US economy at large would be negatively impacted.

For further information, journalists are invited to contact [Johanna Gleeson](mailto:Johanna.Gleeson@oecd.org) in the [OECD Washington Center](http://oecd.org/washingtoncenter) (Johanna.Gleeson@oecd.org / +1 202 822 3866).

Working with over 100 countries, the OECD is a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

All Wales Prevention Zone declared to protect poultry from Avian Flu

The Prevention Zone will come into force from 00:01 on 25 January 2018.

In January, there have been three separate findings in England of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N6 in Wild Birds and in response Defra issued a Prevention Zone across England.

A veterinary risk assessment for England and Wales shows that the risk level for disease in wild birds has increased from Medium to High. The risk associated with direct and indirect transmission to poultry has also increased from Low to Medium. The risk to poultry, however, is dependent on the level of biosecurity at individual sites.

Although there are currently no findings of Avian Influenza in Wales, as a precautionary measure in response to the increased risk level, an All Wales Avian Prevention Zone will be introduced.

The prevention zone will require all keepers of poultry and other captive birds, irrespective of how they are kept, to take appropriate and practicable steps, including:

- ensure the areas where birds are kept are unattractive to wild birds, for example by netting ponds, and by removing wild bird food sources

- feed and water your birds in enclosed areas to discourage wild birds
- minimise movement of people in and out of bird enclosures
- clean and disinfect footwear and keep areas where birds live clean and tidy
- reduce any existing contamination by cleansing and disinfecting concrete areas, and fencing off wet or boggy areas.

Keepers with more than 500 birds will also be required to take some extra biosecurity measures, including restricting access to non-essential people, changing clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“As a precautionary measure, in response to the increased risk level, and to mitigate the risk of infection, I am declaring an All Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

“Although we have had, as yet, no findings of Avian Influenza in 2018, I consider this Prevention Zone and the requirement for enhanced biosecurity to be proportionate to the risk level faced in Wales. It is essential we take steps to protect our poultry industry, international trade and the wider economy in Wales.”

Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop said:

“All keepers of poultry and other captive birds will need to comply with the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone.

Keepers must remain vigilant for signs of disease and practice the very highest levels of biosecurity.

“I strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to provide their details to the Poultry Register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak, enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity and minimise the spread of infection.”

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease and any suspicion should be reported immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)

Information on the requirements of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone, guidance and latest developments are all available on the [Welsh Government](#) website.

Cabinet Secretary sets out aspiration for pan-Wales transport body

Whilst updating Assembly Members on positive discussions with the UK Government regarding the transfer of powers and the Core Valley Lines railway asset, the Cabinet Secretary set out how this further devolution would give us more of the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales.

Taking Wales Forward, Prosperity for All and the Economic Action Plan will be strengthened as we drive a step change in the way we understand, plan, use and invest in transport in Wales. For the first time the Welsh Government has committed to a five-year programme of transport capital funding through Transport for Wales for both transport maintenance and new projects.

Speaking to Assembly Members, Ken Skates said:

“I am mindful of the need to make sure that Transport for Wales can deliver effectively for the whole of Wales, and following my announcement last month of the intention to set up a Transport for Wales business unit in north Wales, I have instructed Transport for Wales to bring forward proposals for a North Wales office. I expect this to be delivered at pace.

“On our new Wales and Borders rail service – we have made significant progress with the UK Government since last summer, and the Secretary of State for Transport and I have now reached agreement on the way forward on a number of key issues. On other issues officials are continuing to make good progress. Further devolution would give us the tools we need to develop the schemes which will provide much needed improvements across Wales, as identified within Network Rail’s Welsh route study.

“Transport for Wales is now entering a new stage of mobilisation, working closely with Business Wales to make opportunities available to local SMEs and third-sector enterprises, through the new rail service and the different metro schemes. Indeed as result of their progress, and subject to the UK Government doing their bit, I look forward to the award of the first made in Wales rail services contract – in May.

“Following the successful model of acquisition of Cardiff Airport, our aim is for the public transport network to be increasingly directly owned or operated by Transport for Wales. We need a transport body that prioritises people and businesses and finds innovative ways of building a truly resilient and modern transport system for the benefit of the people of Wales.”

Something to toast to: Welsh Food and Drinks sector edges nearer to meeting 2020 target early

Speaking during plenary, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths said the industry is thriving and stands on the edge of meeting the target of £7bn turnover by 2020.

The Cabinet Secretary also spoke of the challenges and opportunities Brexit presents and outlined how the Welsh Government is working with the sector to overcome these.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“Our Welsh food and drink industry continues to go from strength to strength. With the industry’s sales turnover increasing from £6.1bn to £6.9bn, we stand on the threshold of reaching our Food and Drink Action Plan target of £7bn by 2020 early.

“This is tremendous progress and we’ve seen great success since the Plan was published in 2014. It reflects the hard work and significant progress by businesses across Wales, large and small.

“The interest in our wonderful Welsh food and drink has never been greater. The quality, service and originality of the Welsh offer are recognised across the World.

“Wales’ food and drink industry is a huge asset. It contributes increasingly to our economy, creating jobs and careers where skills matter. It adds value to our agricultural produce and it brings prestige to our nation with a growing profile and reputation throughout the World. Wales has a winner.

“However, we cannot ignore the challenges and uncertainty Brexit presents. To maintain the momentum we have achieved to date, we must embrace change and seek any opportunities that arise.

“Through continued focus on building on what works, and through a readiness for Brexit, we will be fully ‘fit for market’ with industry well placed for optimal performance. I have every confidence we will continue to succeed and make the best of Brexit and deliver for Wales.”